United Nations A/S-24/PV.1

General Assembly

Twenty-fourth special session

Official Records

1st meeting
Monday, 26 June 2000, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Gurirab (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Item 1 of the provisional agenda

Opening of the session by the Temporary President, the Chairman of the delegation of Namibia

The Temporary President: I declare open the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, entitled "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world".

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Minute of silent prayer or meditation

The Temporary President: I invite representatives to stand and observe one minute of silent prayer or meditation.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silent prayer or meditation.

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/S-24/6)

The Temporary President: I should like, in keeping with the established practice, to invite the attention of the General Assembly to document A/S-24/6, which contains a letter addressed to the President of the General Assembly by the Secretary-General, in which he informs the Assembly that 35 Member States are in arrears in the payment of their financial contributions to the United Nations within the terms of Article 19 of the Charter.

I should like to remind delegations that, under Article 19 of the Charter,

> "A Member of the United Nations which is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the Organization shall have no vote in the General Assembly if the amount of its arrears equals or exceeds the amount of the contributions due from it for the preceding two full years."

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in this document?

It was so decided.

Item 3 of the provisional agenda

Credentials of representatives to the special session of the General Assembly

(a) Appointment of the members of the Credentials Committee

The Temporary President: Rule 28 of the rules of procedure provides that the General Assembly, at the beginning of each session, shall appoint, on the proposal of the President, a Credentials Committee, consisting of nine members.

In accordance with precedents, and as recommended by the Preparatory Committee for the

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twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, the Credentials Committee of the twenty-fourth special session should have the same membership as that of the fifty-fourth regular session of the Assembly, namely, Austria, Bolivia, China, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, South Africa, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago and the United States of America.

If there is no objection, I shall consider the Credentials Committee constituted accordingly.

It was so decided.

The Temporary President: In this connection, may I invite the attention of the members of the Assembly to a note verbale from the Secretary-General, dated 13 March 2000, in which it was stated that credentials should be issued for all representatives to the special session, in accordance with rule 27 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. I would urge all members to submit the credentials of their representatives to the Secretary-General as soon as possible.

Item 4 of the provisional agenda

Election of the President

The Temporary President: The Preparatory Committee for the twenty-fourth special session recommends that the twenty-fourth special session should take place under the presidency of the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth regular session, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab of Namibia.

I take it that the Assembly wishes to elect Mr. Gurirab President of the General Assembly at its twenty-fourth special session by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The Temporary President: I extend my sincere congratulations to Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab and invite him to assume the presidency.

I request the Chief of Protocol to escort the President to the podium.

Mr. Gurirab took the Chair.

Statement by Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, President of the General Assembly at its twenty-fourth special session

The President: I am delighted to welcome you all to the twenty-fourth special session of the United Nations General Assembly.

First of all, I wish to thank my Prime Minister, The Right Honourable Hage G. Geingob of the Republic of Namibia, for presiding over the opening of this meeting, prior to my election to this position. I am most grateful, and pledge to superintend the session to a successful conclusion.

During the pre-session phase we were honoured with the gracious presence of two eminent world leaders: Mr. Adolf Ogi, President of the Swiss Confederation, and Mr. Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Denmark. We are exceedingly delighted by their presence, and in particular by the thoughtful statements they delivered before the start of this crucial special session.

We recall with appreciation the generous hospitality and the best efforts made by the Government and the people of Denmark towards the final and wonderful outcome of the 1995 Copenhagen Summit.

In the same vein, our heartfelt thanks go to the Government and the people of the Swiss Confederation, and in particular to its President, for the kind invitation extended for the holding of the special session in Geneva. It is worth emphasizing that a significant number of delegations present here have received generous assistance from the Swiss Government to be able to attend the conference. On behalf of everybody, we place on record our gratitude and happiness for that goodwill.

Today, 26 June, we commemorate two important days: the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking and the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. I have issued messages to mark the two occasions.

Geneva has always been, and continues to be, an ideal conference venue. This time, in the new millennium, we have come to this historic and beautiful city to confront one of the most urgent challenges of our time. It is the challenge of putting the needs of the people at the centre of the global agenda of peace, development and democracy. We are here to agree on real solutions to the acute problems of real people.

In searching for such solutions, we must review the past. But, more importantly, we must agree on a

future plan of action that brings together Governments, business, parliaments, non-governmental organizations and civil society into a constructive partnership for joint action. At this stage, political will, resources and sustained efforts are required to shift economic globalization onto a new course that will focus that partnership on poverty eradication, full employment and shared prosperity. In this way, all the world's people will be able to share a stake in the future with optimism.

Today, the main challenge facing humankind is represented by the awesome force of globalization. It is said that millions in the world welcome globalization, while millions fear it. What the world actually needs is globalization with a head, a heart and a human face. Heads of State or Government and numerous representatives from across the world who attended the 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen anticipated the crisis of globalization and put great emphasis on fairness and social justice on the balance sheet of values and conscience, alongside profit, loss and gross domestic product. They called for balance between the power of the market forces that produce technology, knowledge and prosperity, and the crippling reality that the distribution of benefits was increasingly and dangerously skewed.

We carry this heavy load as we come here to forge a common understanding in order to turn the situation around for the better. The future must become optimistic and rewarding for all of humankind. Right now, it is very doubtful for millions of earthlings, especially those in the developing countries. It is really not surprising that there is a storm over globalization. In recent months, from Seattle to Washington, D.C., and Davos, actions have spoken louder than words. We all witnessed those confrontations, and they might have been just a warning shot fired across the bow.

The signatories at Copenhagen in 1995 framed a broad strategy covering national, regional and international action to end marginalization and injustice. They promised to establish time-bound targets to cut poverty, promote greater equality between women and men, achieve full employment and establish universal access to education and primary health care. World leaders vowed to accelerate the advancement of the least developed countries and to increase resources for official development assistance. Since then, some noticeable national efforts and programmes have been launched. But let us be honest: we all know that, overall, many developing countries have continued to fall behind. Economic insecurity breeds social insecurity, and the result is untold human misery.

Our task this week, and beyond Geneva, is to build upon the strong foundation of consensus that was reached in Copenhagen and to uphold the social commitment expressed there five years ago. To do that, we must marshal resources for social commitment commensurate with the needs of real people. By this, I mean not only development grants but also other critical areas of policy initiative: debt cancellation, productive investment, measures to discourage financial speculation and firm action to end the tariff and non-tariff barriers that still impose lopsided development on the least developed countries. All these steps should be taken in unison and on a sustained basis. Otherwise, what one hand might give in development assistance, the other hand will take away. In many cases, that has been happening all along.

The recent South Summit, held in Havana, Cuba, reiterated the importance of South-North economic and trade relations and urged the recent Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development meeting, as well as the forthcoming meeting of the Group of Eight and, particularly, the Millennium Summit to take seriously these recommendations and proposals. The recent meeting of the ministers of the Group of Fifteen, held in Cairo, Egypt, also echoed these calls and reiterated the same concerns.

The most frequently cited indication that social development is not yet secure on the international agenda is the decline in official development assistance that has continued since Copenhagen, where the goal of committing 0.7 per cent of gross national product was reaffirmed. Several European countries have met the targets they set for themselves, and a few other countries are moving in the same direction. At the same time, however, the failure of wealthy countries to keep that promise is hard to understand. It is a disappointing setback, and I can only hope for a change of heart in the future.

The burden of third world debt is, in fact, even more crushing than the absence of aid. For example, a number of African countries are forced to pay more for debt service than for education and health combined. On top of that, much of their debt was incurred by

undemocratic regimes that were encouraged and supported by certain industrialized countries. To add insult to injury, more aid and cooperation was extended in the past to those dictatorships than is being given to the democratizing and reforming Governments in Africa today. Although the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative was launched in 1996, only four or five of 33 applicants have qualified. Some leaders in industrialized countries often lament the burden that deficit spending will impose on their children. Why, then, has there been benign neglect in the face of the crushing mortgage being imposed on future generations in impoverished countries?

The private sector could do — in fact, it has done — more than the public sector to provide development resources in the form of investment and joint ventures. Unfortunately, only a fraction of this is long-term productive business partnership, and little of that goes to the developing countries that most need it. Much of this in recent years has been volatile, short-term capital flows.

For their part, the United Nations agencies and programmes, in partnership with Governments and non-governmental organizations, continue their most indispensable work in the field, saving lives and assisting reconstruction and development. We will be hearing from them later on.

If the alternative to aid is trade, it should follow that the prerequisite for trade is tariff reduction and strengthening of trade preferences. Most developing countries depend on commodities for more than half of their export revenues. Their primary economic sectors are agriculture and textiles, which are precisely the areas that many industrialized countries so doggedly protect. There would be no more effective way for the industrialized countries to demonstrate commitment to sustainable social development than to implement special and deferential treatment of the exports of developing countries. Surely, we can agree that it is neither fair nor helpful to pursue a form of economic liberalization that forces fledgling developing countries to open their markets while excluding the only services and goods they can offer for export.

New trade laws and debt cancellation initiatives have been adopted recently by key industrialized countries, and we welcome this step as a good thing and a way of moving things in the right direction. Granted, there are now two ways to go about this. Developing countries themselves must deepen their commitment to political, economic and legal reforms and accountable government. Otherwise, the incidence of marginalization will be enforced even more harshly, and the victims will be the poor and the most vulnerable sectors of society. There is really no point in our being arrogant or despondent when, in the case of Africa today, war, death and economic woes deny livelihood to millions of our people and denude them of human dignity.

On the other hand, those fortunate countries that benefited from early industrialization and are therefore today in an ideal position to profit immensely from globalization should acknowledge and assume the responsibilities towards the least fortunate that accompany their great fortune.

The special session in Geneva is a vital link in a chain extending from the eventful past and leading to the Millennium Summit in New York in September, as well as to the scheduled high-level event on financing for development in 2001. No doubt the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions must work more closely together on financing for development. Careful and inclusive preparations are needed to ensure the success of that high-level event next year.

Let me shift at this stage for a moment to another, related field of common interest: the multilateral treaty framework. Much of the social progress achieved over the past 50 years and more is underpinned by a comprehensive multilateral treaty formation. Many of the more than 500 multilateral treaties deposited with the Secretary-General deal specifically with socio-economic issues. I join the Secretary-General in his urgent call on those States that have hitherto not signed or ratified many of these treaties to do so with all deliberate speed. In this connection, I would like to commend the Secretary-General for his initiative urging States which, while committed to these treaties, may lack the necessary resources to sign or ratify them to advise him of any difficulties they may have. To accomplish this, the Secretary-General has requested the United Nations system, including those in the field, to assist the States concerned to be able to fulfil their obligations pursuant to the Charter of our Organization in this vital field. The Millennium Summit will offer the best possible opportunity for world leaders to firmly anchor their collective commitment to the rule of law. Parliaments of the world should themselves be

robust catalysts and play an effective role in this noble endeavour.

In concluding, let me say a word about where we are coming from and about a way forward. A little over two weeks ago, some of us in this Hall were present in New York for the Assembly's twenty-third special session, on women's rights, empowerment and gender equality. It was obvious to anyone listening to the 207 statements made in the plenary or participating in the negotiations on the final outcome document on further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action that the issues addressed in respect of the 12 critical areas of concern set out in 1995 were closely linked and often identical to the social development issues that we are here to tackle.

At the Beijing + 5 special session we agreed on the need for policies and strategies to address the concerns of women in poverty, the economic empowerment of women and women's involvement and participation in all human issues. Are these not the same concerns we will be considering as we assess how well Governments have implemented the 12 commitments and the Programme of Action to reduce poverty and achieve full employment and the inclusion and participation of women and men in society, adopted at Copenhagen in 1995? Promoting sustainable social development will help eliminate barriers to equality, eradicate poverty and overcome the disparities, inequalities and injustices that exist in the world today, most especially for women.

Please, let us not forget the plight of children in the world. Their despair has now been further exacerbated by the breakdown of the family and by the horrors of organized crime and child soldiering. If these goals are achieved, we will at long last be able to say that a sea change is under way. I truly hope so. Now let us dive in.

I now call on the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan.

The Secretary-General: Thank you, Mr. President, for those most eloquent and perceptive remarks.

We must all agree that the World Summit for Social Development in 1995 was indeed ahead of its time. Events since then have confirmed a central insight, which I believe can be stated in two closely related propositions. First, economic growth, if it is to be broad-based and sustainable, requires investment in people, their health, their education and their security. Secondly, essential though it is, growth will not by itself guarantee that most people in a country have the chance to live lives of dignity and fulfilment. A healthy society is one that takes care of all its members and gives them a chance to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

No one must be discriminated against. No one must be obliged to conform to an official culture or denied the right to associate with others to defend their particular identity and interests.

In short, social and economic welfare are inseparable concepts. Without economic prosperity, no country can provide for all the social needs of its citizens. Nor can any country be called truly prosperous so long as many of its citizens are left to fend for themselves against ignorance, hardship and disease. Nor can any country achieve prosperity by subordinating all social concerns to the achievement of a few quantitative benchmarks. What matters in the last resort is the quality of life, a big part of which is the feeling that you belong freely to your society, and that it belongs to you as well.

These conclusions apply to rich and poor countries alike, but they are especially significant for the global debate on development. In that context, they have been advocated for years within the United Nations, but are now much more widely accepted by other multilateral organizations.

It is surely a sign of the times that this very afternoon I shall be launching a new report, "A Better World for All", which has been co-signed by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and, of course, the United Nations. It is the first time ever that the four main international organizations concerned with development have come together and reviewed progress towards the internationally agreed goals for reducing extreme poverty and have articulated a common vision of the way forward.

Just ahead of us is the Millennium Summit, which will take place in New York this September. It will be the largest gathering of heads of State or Government the world has ever seen. If the spirit of Copenhagen

can be maintained in Geneva, I have every hope that it will be further strengthened in New York.

In the report which I have presented for consideration by the Summit, I put great emphasis on social objectives. I believe they should be seen not as adjuncts to the struggle against worldwide poverty, but as integral parts of that struggle. If social problems are to be tackled the world over, society as a whole will have to function properly; if not, society will not function properly, and poverty will not be defeated either.

Fifteen years from now, will there still be tens of millions of primary school-age children who are not attending school? Will tens of millions of young people of both genders still be searching unsuccessfully for work? Will small children and pregnant women still be dying every minute from malaria and other preventable diseases? Will young people still be contracting and spreading the HIV virus because they do not know how you catch it and how to avoid it? And will treatment for AIDS still be priced far beyond the means of those suffering from it in the developing countries? Will whole regions of the world, and large groups even in the richest societies, still be condemned to live on the margins of the global economy? Will most people throughout the developing world still be left out of the universe of mobile phones and the Internet, while the industrialized world, with a few enclaves in the South, rushes further and further ahead, using even newer technologies that none of us here has yet heard of? And will many societies still be polarized along lines of ethnicity, race or class, prone to outbursts of group hatred and even violence?

If the answer to any of those questions is yes, we shall not be able to claim convincingly that we are winning the battle against human misery, even if, as I firmly hope, we have succeeded in halving the proportion of people living on one dollar a day or less.

That brings me to the question of resources. You are absolutely right, Mr. President, to raise that issue, an issue which we shall address in its broadest dimensions next year at the planned global meeting on financing for development. It is only natural that the poor countries of the world, which have so few resources of their own, should look for help to the rich ones. Many of those rich countries have acute social problems of their own. But none of them can be indifferent to the social conditions in which so many people in the poor countries live. Such extreme squalour is an affront to our common humanity. We are all impoverished if the poor are denied opportunities to make a living. And it is within our power to extend these opportunities to all.

I have said it in my millennium report, and I say it again here: the rich countries have an indispensable role to play by further opening their markets, by providing deeper and faster debt relief and by giving more and better-focused development aid. But those changes are less likely to come, and will bring few real benefits even if they do come, unless the leaders and peoples of the developing countries show real determination to mobilize their own resources — above all, their own human resources — to deal with their own social problems. The case for making extra resources available through debt relief and increased development aid can be made compellingly when it is clear that those resources will indeed be used to provide social services which benefit the poor. But it is hard indeed to make that case when there is reason to think that extra resources may be used to purchase weapons or to raise the standards of living of an already privileged elite.

Similarly, more open markets can only benefit countries which are able to supply those markets at competitive prices with goods that people want to buy. That means countries, which by good governance and sound economic policies have created a propitious climate for investment, both domestic and foreign. Those countries which are racked by conflict, held back by unnecessary regulations or plundered by unaccountable officials will benefit little from economic assistance, whatever form it takes.

Let me conclude by saying how glad I am that this session is being held now. There could not be a better time to focus on the real social problems facing the human race and on the most effective ways of tackling them. I wish you a very serious and productive session. I look forward eagerly to your conclusions. And I hope that they, in turn, will influence the deliberations of the Millennium Summit in New York this September.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

Item 5 of the provisional agenda

Report of the Preparatory Committee for the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/S-24/2 and Add. 1 and 2 (Parts I-III))

The President: I should like to inform members that the report of the Preparatory Committee for the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly is contained in document A/S-24/2 and Add.1 and Add.2 (Parts I-III).

I give the floor to the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, Mr. Cristián Maquieira of Chile.

Mr. Maquieira (Chile), Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*spoke in Spanish*): It is my duty to introduce the report of the Preparatory Committee, whose work, concluded last week, was the very foundation of the process we are now beginning at this special session of the General Assembly.

The Preparatory Committee had two substantive meetings and produced the foundation of the agreement that is to emerge from this special session. On the basis of the Copenhagen agreements, particularly the 10 commitments, the Preparatory Committee drew up a set of draft outcomes to be adopted by the General Assembly at this special session. These basically consist of a political declaration, a chapter on the review of the Copenhagen agreements and further actions and initiatives to implement the commitments of the World Summit for Social Development. The major part of the first two texts – the political declaration and the review document – has been entirely negotiated; the latter has been agreed, though we must still present the definitive agreement later this week on further initiatives to complement the achievements of Copenhagen.

In my capacity as Chairman of the Preparatory Committee, I should like to thank the Bureau – Ambassadors Gorita, Richelle, Baali and Asadi – for their contribution, as well as the Secretariat. In the United Nations litany of opening one phase while concluding another, the Preparatory Committee's work has been very successful.

I should like express some personal hopes about our forthcoming work this week and for the United Nations as a whole. I have no doubt that, within and without this Hall, there are many people who have lost faith in the institutions governing the world's economy. To my mind, this loss of faith is due more than anything else to the fact that, in recent decades, we have continued to live in a very and increasingly unequal world, within countries as well as among them.

We representatives participating in this special session have a particular responsibility, because these are interesting times for the United Nations. In all candour and honesty, we must conclude that the United Nations is at a crossroads, because last year's well-known "Seattle challenge" is not a challenge to the Bretton Woods institutions alone; it is also a challenge to the United Nations to demonstrate its relevance once again and to recommit itself to its principles and objectives, which are, essentially, to represent the voices of those who cannot speak for themselves. There 1.3 billion people living in extreme poverty and almost 2 billion more who are on the verge of it and who have no other hope than that offered by the various bodies of the United Nations.

I would say that the United Nations may not have the very positive tools available to other institutions, but it does have something that others lack: the legitimacy born of universal participation and the universal mandate it enjoys from the Charter. This is the only institution that enjoys a sufficiently broad mandate to succeed in integrating labour, social, economic development, the environment, social development and other issues. The United Nations is the only institution that can strike that balance. Thus, to a certain extent, all partial exercises end up and are resolved here.

In conclusion, the central issue of globalization that we have referred to so often lies not so much in its technological progress or benefits, which are well known to us all, but in its defects and in the phenomenon, very much alive today, of the total absence of objective rules for imposing order on globalization so as to exploit its advantages and minimize the damage it causes. It has been said on more than one occasion that globalization itself is going to determine its own rules, but we know that is not so, because the rules of globalization benefit those who profit from the process and not those who suffer its negative impact.

Consequently, it is very clear that there is a need to begin the process of establishing those rules. That

process begins here. To a certain extent, it began in Copenhagen in 1995 and continues this week. Much has been made of the convergence of economic and social issues, which perhaps should be the first rule and cornerstone of globalization issues. I believe that the goal we must fulfil in order to leave this session with a sense of pride and satisfaction is to integrate social norms with the essence of the doctrine of globalization. That, which sounds so very easy, actually represents a vast effort to achieve fairness and justice in distribution.

Moreover, this is not a North-South conference. This is not one of those conferences where a series of commitments are made to score points. The approach created in Copenhagen is one in which advantages and commitments are shared. Commitments that benefit the North are not going to work if they do not benefit the South as well. Thus, my hope for this session lies in recalling one of my favorite old rock-and-roll songs: You can't always get what you want, but it is absolutely essential that this special session give us what we need.

The President: The General Assembly is grateful to the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee and to those who participated in the Committee for their efforts to get this special session off to a good start.

Item 6 of the provisional agenda

Organization of the session

Draft decision I (A/S-24/2)

The President: Members are invited to turn to draft decision I, recommended by the Preparatory Committee for the twenty-fourth special session in paragraph 42 of its report contained in document A/S-24/2.

Draft decision I is entitled "Organizational arrangements for the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly". May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to adopt draft decision I?

Draft decision I was adopted.

The President: On the basis of the decision just taken by the General Assembly on the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee, the following arrangements shall apply to the twenty-fourth special session:

The Vice-Presidents of the twenty-fourth special session shall be the same as those of the fifty-fourth regular session of the General Assembly.

The Vice-Presidents of the fifty-fourth regular session are the following Member States: Algeria, Bolivia, China, the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, France, Grenada, Iceland, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Lithuania, Monaco, Nigeria, the Russian Federation, Seychelles, Tajikistan, Thailand, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America.

If there is no objection, I shall take it that the Assembly decides to elect by acclamation those States Vice-Presidents of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly.

It was so decided.

The President: Regarding the Chairpersons of the Main Committees of the twenty-fourth special session, the Chairpersons of the Main Committees of the fifty-fourth regular session shall serve in the same capacity at the special session.

The Chairpersons of the Main Committees at the fifty-fourth regular session are the following: the First Committee, Mr. Raimundo González of Chile; of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), Mr. Sotirios Zackheos of Cyprus; of the Second Committee, Mr. Roble Olhye of Djibouti; of the Third Committee, Mr. Vladimir Galuška of the Czech Republic; of the Fifth Committee, Ms. Penny Wensley of Australia; of the Sixth Committee, Mr. Phakiso Mochochoko of Lesotho.

If there is no objection, I shall take it that the Assembly decides to elect by acclamation these representatives Chairpersons of the Main Committees at the twenty-fourth special session.

It was so decided.

The President: As concerns the Third Committee, the Chairman of the Third Committee has informed me that, in his absence, he has designated Ms. Mónica Martínez of Ecuador, Vice-Chairperson of the Third Committee, to act as Chairperson of that Committee for the duration of the special session.

In adopting the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee, the Assembly has established

an ad hoc committee of the whole, which will be designated as Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the Twenty-Fourth Special Session.

In accordance with the recommendations of the Preparatory Committee just adopted by the General Assembly, the Chairperson of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole will be a full member of the General Committee of the twenty-fourth special session.

Concerning the election of the Chairperson of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole, the Preparatory Committee recommends that its Chairman, Mr. Cristián Maquieira of Chile, serve in the same capacity in the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole.

I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly at its twenty-fourth special session to elect Mr. Cristián Maquieira Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole by acclamation.

It was so decided.

The President: I congratulate Mr. Cristián Maquieira on behalf of the General Assembly, and on my own behalf, and wish him well in the important and onerous responsibilities that he has just assumed.

The General Committee of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly has now been fully constituted.

On the basis of the decision just taken by the General Assembly, observers may make statements in the debate in the plenary.

States members of the specialized agencies of the United Nations that are not Members of the United Nations may participate in the work of the twenty-fourth special session in the capacity of observers.

Associate members of the regional commissions may participate in the special session, in the same observer capacity as held for their participation in the World Summit for Social Development.

Representatives of United Nations programmes and other entities in the United Nations system may make statements in the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole.

Representatives of non-governmental organizations may make statements in the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole. Given the availability of time, a limited number of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council may also make statements in the debate in plenary. In this regard, I would like to inform the Assembly that consultations are still ongoing regarding the list of selected non-governmental organizations. As soon as the list is ready, it will be presented to the Assembly for its approval.

In accordance with the decision just adopted by the General Assembly, there will be 10 plenary meetings over the five-day period, with two meetings per day: from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. In view of the large number of representatives already inscribed on the list of speakers for the debate in the plenary, I should like to inform members that I intend to start the plenary meetings promptly at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.

In this connection, I would like to assure the Assembly that I shall be in the Chair as usual, punctually, at the scheduled time. I sincerely hope that all delegations will make a special effort to cooperate in this regard.

With regard to the length of statements in the debate in plenary meeting, I should like to remind representatives that, on the basis of the decision just adopted by the Assembly, statements should not exceed seven minutes.

In connection with the time limits, a light system has been installed at the speakers' rostrum, which functions as follows: a green light will be activated at the start of the speaker's statement; an orange light will be activated 30 seconds before the end of the seven minutes; and a red light will be activated when the seven-minute limit has elapsed. I should like to appeal to speakers in the debate in plenary meeting to cooperate in observing the time limits of their statements, so that all those inscribed on the list of speakers for a given meeting will be heard at that meeting.

I should now like to draw the attention of representatives to a matter concerning the participation of Palestine, in its capacity as observer, in the sessions and work of the General Assembly.

Members will recall General Assembly resolution 52/250 of 7 July 1998 and its annex, as well as a note by the Secretary-General contained in document A/52/1002, which outlines the Secretary-General's understanding of the implementation of the modalities annexed to the resolution.

I should like to draw attention in particular to paragraph 6 of the annex to resolution 52/250, which reads as follows:

> "The right to make interventions, with a precursory explanation or the recall of relevant General Assembly resolutions being made only once by the President of the General Assembly at the start of each session of the Assembly."

Accordingly, for the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, the observer of Palestine will participate in the work of the General Assembly in accordance with resolution 3237 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974, resolution 43/177 of 15 December 1988 and resolution 52/250 of 7 July 1998, with no further need for a precursory explanation prior to any intervention by Palestine in this special session.

Item 7 of the provisional agenda

Adoption of the agenda

The President: The provisional agenda of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly is contained in document A/S-24/1, which has been recommended for adoption by the Preparatory Committee of the twenty-fourth special session in draft decision II, in paragraph 42 of its report contained in document A/S-24/2. In order to expedite its work, the Assembly may wish to consider the provisional agenda directly in plenary meeting without referring it to the General Committee.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to this procedure?

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it, then, that the Assembly wishes to adopt the provisional agenda as it appears in document A/S-24/1?

It was so decided.

The President: Regarding the allocation of items, on the basis of the decision taken by the General Assembly, all the items on the agenda are to be considered directly in plenary meeting.

In addition, agenda item 8 has also been allocated to the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the twenty-fourth special session for consideration, on the understanding that the debate on item 8 shall take place in plenary meeting.

Agenda item 8

Proposals for further initiatives for social development

(a) Review and appraisal of progress since the World Summit for Social Development

(b) Proposals for further initiatives for the full implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development

The President: The Assembly will first hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Abderrahman El-Youssoufi, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Morocco.

Mr. El-Youssoufi (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to say how pleased I am to take part in this special session and to express the satisfaction of the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco at seeing social issues at the forefront of policies on growth and development cooperation. Indeed, in March 1995, at Copenhagen, the States Members of the United Nations reached a global consensus aimed at eliminating poverty, promoting employment and ensuring social integration for the benefit of the poor people of the world. This consensus was crowned by a general Declaration and a Programme of Action based on the implementation of 10 commitments.

Firmly committed to placing its social policy within the framework of that general Declaration and basing its action on the commitments undertaken at Copenhagen, the Government of His Majesty the King, which I have the honour of leading, has placed at the centre of its preoccupations issues relating to democracy, human rights, human dignity, freedoms and principles of justice and equity, in the framework of a State based on the rule of law.

In this context, the Government has drawn up and put in place a social development strategy aimed at achieving the objectives sought by the Copenhagen Summit. Furthermore, in its determination to attain its objectives and to be in conformity with the 20/20 initiative, my country's Government is committed to increasing resources for the social sector, which grew from 38.6 per cent of the overall State budget in 1995 to 47 per cent for the current financial year.

These resources have gone towards supporting a social policy based on the extension of basic social services to the underprivileged, combating unemployment and social exclusion, reducing inequalities, reforming our system of social protection and the extension of solidarity mechanisms. In all these areas, the Moroccan Government has identified needs and objectives and has decided on an ambitious and realistic time-frame. Our programme for supplying potable water to the rural areas will enable us to reach a coverage rate of 80 per cent by 2010, to the benefit of 7.3 million people. The programme for general rural electrification will benefit 1.5 million families by 2010, while the national programme for rural trails will bring 6 million people out of isolation by 2004.

In the area of combating poverty, specific programmes have been initiated and institutions and appropriate financial mechanisms have been created, including the Mohammed V Foundation for solidarity, presided over by His Majesty King Mohammed VI, the Social Development Agency and the Hassan II Fund for Economic and Social Development.

As for the struggle against unemployment, the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco has implemented a policy aimed at promoting productive, job-generating investments through the reform of our training and integration system, creation of the national agency for the promotion of employment and skills and the implementation of a self-employment programme for young graduates.

In the same context, we have developed a microcredit system and have initiated the reform of our national social security system. We have also committed ourselves to establish a system of unemployment compensation. Moreover, particular attention is being paid to the integration of women in development, and provisions for the aged, the disabled and children in difficulties are being set up.

This policy was conceived in the framework of dialogue and ongoing consultation between the State, the territorial communities, the private sector, trade unions, actors of civil society and regional and international organizations, in accordance with our will to make citizens' participation the basis of a shared and unified management of our social development strategy.

Despite the commitments made at Copenhagen, the reality of our planet is that large segments of the world population continue to live in dire conditions. In this connection, recent statistics emanating from the United Nations Development Programme show that 1.3 billion persons live in extreme poverty, and 550 million people suffer from malnutrition. This situation is aggravated in Africa by the devastating effects of pandemics, internal conflicts and the debt burden.

The same statistics attest to the fact that globalization has resulted in an improved standard of living and in the emergence of new investment and employment opportunities in other areas of the world. The appearance of renewed forms of protectionism, the emergence of major transnational networks of global markets, the lack of solidarity in dealing with the debt and the decrease in development aid are at the root of the unequal evolution that characterizes our world.

Because of this planet-wide social fracture, we must recall the statement of the United Nations Secretary-General that many countries experience globalization not as a factor of progress, but rather as a destructive force capable, like a hurricane, of destroying in a few moments lives, jobs and traditions in its path.

In this connection, I wish to reiterate the appeal I made at the South Summit of the Group of 77 at Havana in April 2000, regarding the urgency of acting to establish more equitable multilateral trade rules and to implement new modalities for financial and monetary regulation to prevent international economic and financial crises. Furthermore, converting debt into investment to the benefit of the medium-income countries of the South, debt alleviation or cancellation for the least developed countries, particularly those of Africa, and the mobilization of additional financial resources to support social programmes in these countries and to assist in the modernization of their economies should constitute in the future the essential pillars of new policies for development cooperation.

Regarding another matter, migrant workers should enjoy the protection guaranteed by national and international instruments. Moreover, host countries must ratify the treaties and conventions relating to the protection of workers and their family members.

Under these conditions the international community will be able to build the lasting foundations of a globalization based on solidarity and the controlled liberalization of economies.

Convinced of the fairness of such options, the Kingdom of Morocco, through its King, took the initiative during the Euro-African Summit at Cairo of cancelling the entire debt of the least developed African countries and of removing all customs barriers on products coming from these countries.

May the Geneva session allow the formulation of new strategies and the implementation of innovative initiatives to render the Copenhagen Summit objectives operational and to make the world consensus on social development into a tangible reality of the daily lives of the many poor sectors of our planet.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

President Obiang Nguema Mbasogo (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish to begin by giving warm thanks to the Government of the Swiss Confederation for the decisiveness and courage it has shown in hosting this special session of the General Assembly.

Following the Copenhagen Summit, held in 1995, the international community is meeting again in a special session under the auspices of the United Nations, to consider once again one of the major concerns that strongly affect balance in the world, namely, social development.

Indeed, the current situation is not very different from that of the past. Statistics in the past showed that poverty was advancing more rapidly than world population growth and that the possibilities for development of the most seriously affected countries were practically nil. The international community had to adopt effective mechanisms of cooperation to grapple with poverty, foster international solidarity and create remunerative jobs. These are the three objectives that the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action enshrined as objectives for the third millennium, in order to speed up sustainable social development in the world.

However, we note that there has been little change in the world situation, which is facing an uncertain future. The richest countries are becoming richer, while the poorest are being reduced to misery. Unemployment is increasing through lack of investment in the poorest countries, and their gross national product is decreasing. The external debt burden has cancelled the possibilities of investment in the productive sectors, while the social sectors are getting hardly any attention whatsoever. The range of collateral problems is multiplying, as we witness mass migrations of people to urban centres and to more hospitable countries, the proliferation of diseases and increasing illiteracy rates, morbidity and mortality, struggles for survival of human groups, social insecurity and so forth.

Despite the efforts made by countries for the maintenance of peace, we deplore and condemn the provocative attitudes that give rise to fratricidal wars that annihilate populations and destroy the scant economic and social infrastructure of developing countries.

The evaluation that can be made of the post-1995 situation is, generally speaking, negative for countries that have not seen any increase in their national production. However, my country's experience is that in order to foster sustainable social development, we need not only peace and social stability, but also abundant economic resources and diverse sources of financing. This is not a task that could be undertaken by one State alone, especially if it is a low-income country that is lacking in productive infrastructure. We need the solidarity of the entire international community and the political will to cooperate, as recommended in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

My country has not had this solidarity, and I suppose that many needy countries have not had it either. Through the General Assembly, we ask the international community to turn its eyes again towards those countries that are in a state of turmoil. We should not condition assistance on political situations whose causes are unknown to us. In fact, assistance should be given precisely to those countries that are suffering from political turmoil in order to eliminate the root causes. No country wants to remain in poverty and underdevelopment, and no Government wants political instability. There is a lack of economic means for many, but there is also a lack of support and international solidarity.

Since the adoption of the General Assembly resolution more than 20 years ago calling on States to reduce their military budgets and eliminate nuclear weapons, and to earmark those funds to support development programmes in developing countries, no

country of this world Organization can claim that it has benefited from the will for solidarity of the international community. After the Copenhagen Summit, my country adopted a national strategy to eliminate poverty, foster internal solidarity and create remunerative jobs. We held a national economic meeting in our country in September 1997 that defined the short- and medium-term strategy for attaining these objectives.

In order to combat poverty, the Government organized a national conference on rural development and food security, which took place in Malabo in December 1999. The Government signed cooperation agreements with the Cuban Government and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in order to implement the rural development and food security plan adopted by the conference, as a way of bringing about the sustainability that must characterize our whole strategy.

To foster internal solidarity and social cohesion, the Government has taken the following measures: a democratic consensus with political parties, through the signing of a binding national covenant; revising and updating the agreements of the covenant; ongoing negotiations on an agreed programme of governance, with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme; the creation of an independent institute to promote and defend human rights and democracy, with the assistance of the United States institute for democratic strategies; and creating a subregional Central African parliament, with its headquarters in Equatorial Guinea, a Supreme Court of Justice and the Commission for the Defence and Security of Central Africa. These institutions need the support of the international community.

For the creation of remunerative jobs, the Government has taken the following actions: the adoption of measures for economic restructuring and the adoption of an economic policy to facilitate economic activity, so that the Government is not in competition with the private sector; assigning to the private sector the role of being the driving force of growth; greater facilitation of foreign investment and cooperation in order to create jobs and increase tax revenues; and the promotion of measures in our general labour law to encourage the creation of jobs.

My country has not received any substantial assistance from the international community for the implementation of this programme, and we are availing ourselves of the scant income that we receive from the incipient oil-production sector in our country.

It is unfair, in view of this situation, that my country has been classified as a medium-income country, so it cannot receive concessional credits.

Every developing country will explain here the efforts it is making to overcome the current crisis of social development. But I am sure that the world economic situation has been getting worse and worse since 1995. I would like to recall and reaffirm here that poverty, social exclusion and the absence of productive employment are a humiliation to human dignity.

The initiatives undertaken to date by the international community to help the least developed countries have been very half-hearted, insufficient and of limited effect. The situation of social development in the least developed countries requires dynamic action and pragmatism from the international community, just as the Marshall Plan did, by addressing the real problems — such as external debt — that are undermining any potential for development in those countries.

Specifically, we propose the total cancellation of the external debt of the least developed countries, under the sole condition that the resources released be earmarked for anti-poverty programmes, the creation of secure and decent employment, and social integration. This will require a strategy that not only calls for internal measures, but that extends to radical reform of the current international economic system, which must be more firmly based in the solidarity and support of States, justice and equity in international economic relations.

I wish this special session every success in its endeavours.

The President: I thank the President of Equatorial Guinea for his statement.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jacob Zuma, Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa.

Mr. Zuma (South Africa): With the advent of democracy in South Africa six years ago, the newly elected Government, together with the people of our country, inherited a distorted system of governance, with institutions that were in direct conflict with the

imperatives for sustainable economic growth, social development and our reintegration into the world economy and community of nations.

We were faced with the daunting challenge of transforming our country, in a sustained and deliberate manner, in order to address the deeply entrenched poverty affecting millions of our people; a racially polarized society in terms of wealth distribution and opportunities; and a brutalized society with intolerably high levels of violence, corruption, social disintegration and moral decay.

When South Africa joined the community of nations in signing the Copenhagen Declaration in 1995, it was another critical point in our history as a young democracy. Our commitment to addressing poverty, promoting social integration, creating an enabling environment for social development, promoting full employment, building the capacity of our people and mobilizing resources for social development held special significance for us, as they still do today.

Through the rights and liberties enshrined in our Constitution and the relevant institutions — such as the Human Rights Commission, the Gender Commission, the Constitutional Court, the Public Protector and so on — we have ensured the protection and promotion of human rights and the restoration of the dignity of all our peoples.

Critical in all this are the public-private partnerships, including such joint negotiating forums as the National Economic, Development and Labour Council, that have created the space for the engagement of all social partners in new development partnerships. State institutions are also being restructured to enable them to promote an ethos of service, accountability and transparency and to eliminate corrupt practices at every level.

Great strides have been taken in ensuring free access to health care for children under six years of age and pregnant women. Our social security benefits are now accessible to all who are eligible, irrespective of race or sex. However, many challenges still remain, and amongst the most critical is the HIV/AIDS pandemic that has the potential to reverse all of our gains. It is clear to us that there is a direct link between HIV/AIDS and poverty. The incidence of poverty provides fertile ground for the exacerbation of this pandemic.

It is therefore of grave concern to us that vital health care and medication remain out of reach for the people who need it most, many of whom are in the South, and particularly in Africa. We therefore urge the international community to integrate the ethics of human development into trade negotiations and to ensure that the existing trade and patent regimes are not skewed in favour of the corporate sector at the expense of the most vulnerable sectors of our populations.

Our commitment to addressing poverty, promoting employment and building human capacity is evident from the initiatives we have taken to prioritize education, including the problem of illiteracy and skills development. Our commitment to addressing racism and inequality is unquestionable. We will be holding a national conference on racism in South Africa later this year and will also be hosting the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

The links between the Beijing Declaration on women and the World Summit for Social Development commitments need to be reinforced, as women, children and the elderly still bear the brunt of poverty and social and economic exclusion. The translation of our vision and goals into concrete and sustainable programmes requires an enabling regional and global environment. There is no question that peace and stability are prerequisites for economic growth and sustainable development. We cannot continue to address issues of social and economic development without addressing the question of the wars and conflicts raging around the world.

We are therefore committed to the resolution of conflicts through dialogue and to building capacity for conflict prevention and management in our subregions and on the continent as a whole. However, our capacity to deliver on our social commitment to improving the lives of people in many of our countries is seriously hampered by crippling debt servicing and repayments. South Africa therefore reiterates its support for debt relief for the highly indebted and poorest nations, most of which are in Africa. In this regard, South Africa's development trajectory cannot be separated from that of its neighbours in the southern African region nor from the continent as a whole.

While much can be and is being done to strengthen our domestic response to our persistent

problems, international agreements on free and fair trade and the promotion of peace and justice are also critical. Economic growth in the region has not been sufficient to create sustainable jobs. For the region, job creation and job security remain major challenges.

Resource constraints have seriously limited the region's ability to promote job creation even through labour-intensive public works programmes. Much-needed investments in infrastructure and rural development initiatives have been set back by external debt and macroeconomic constraints.

Our commitment to address poverty, promote employment and build human capacity is also evident in the initiatives we have undertaken in our educational system. In this regard, we are reviewing our educational system to ensure that knowledge and skills are relevant to a more globally integrated world and that, at the same time, it is also able to address the problems of illiteracy and access to opportunities for poor people. Together with the ratification and implementation of international human rights instruments in countries, we would like to see mechanisms to monitor the implementation and protection of such rights.

While we all accept that good governance is essential for the protection and promotion of human rights, we cannot forget that this requires the setting up of relevant institutions within an enabling legal framework. These institutions require substantial human, material and financial resources. Many nations of the South do not have the necessary resources for these, and would need sustained technical and financial assistance. Since the last Summit, overall levels of official development assistance have declined, with most donor countries not meeting commitments made in Copenhagen. Donor countries need to be sensitive to the specific needs of recipient nations and honour aid commitments on the basis of development priorities.

We are concerned at the trend in our forums that seems to attempt to water down and renege on commitments made in the Beijing and Copenhagen Declarations. We certainly cannot remain silent, or be party to the systematic reversal of the gains made in Copenhagen and Beijing. We therefore urge countries and participants to implement commitments undertaken in Copenhagen and Beijing, and those that are going to be undertaken here at the special session. To us, as developing countries, the Copenhagen Declaration and the Beijing commitments were significant steps in addressing the legacies facing our nations, and they indeed remain important in our endeavours to create a better life for our people.

South Africa commits itself to the 20/20 initiative on social development. We urge all countries to work together to fulfil this important objective.

The President: I thank the Vice-President of the Republic of South Africa for his statement.

The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Samdech Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Mr. Hun Sen (Cambodia) (*spoke in Khmer; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): I am very pleased to represent and speak on behalf of Cambodia and its people at this meeting.

We are meeting here on a very appropriate occasion to discuss an overarching subject of immediate importance to all of us. This is one of the first major United Nations gatherings at the start of the new millennium, and I am particularly delighted that this session is devoting its attention entirely to social development and poverty alleviation, with particular focus on the least developed countries and their needs and handicaps arising from globalization and its impact.

Five years have passed since the United Nations World Summit for Social Development was held in Copenhagen in 1995. That marked the first time in history that Heads of State or Government had gathered to recognize the significance of social development and human well-being for all, and to give those goals the highest priority in the twenty-first century. The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action established a new consensus to place people at the centre of our concern for sustainable development, and pledged to eradicate poverty, promote full and productive employment and foster social integration to achieve a stable, safe and just society for all.

However, it is also clear that the national and international policy responses for this purpose have been uneven. Despite some advances, there has been little progress in some key areas, and regress is evident in others. Globalization and unprecedented, rapid technological advances continue to present both opportunities and challenges for social and economic

development. Never before in world history has mankind built up the potentials and capacities in science and technology to create such enormous wealth. However, the world has never before seen such disparity and inequality. The technological and scientific revolution that shortened distances and made the world smaller through the development of transportation and telecommunications coexists with the increasing gap between wealth and poverty, as well as between development and underdevelopment.

Almost 900 million people in Asia are living below the poverty line. About 30 per cent of Asians do not have access to clean water. About 50 per cent of Asian adults are illiterate. One can point to a long list of this kind of statistics, which are called the challenges of globalization by mainstream economists. In this particular context, we are all standing at an important juncture where we can invent a new, inclusive developmental paradigm that will benefit the many and uplift them to acceptable levels of human existence. In developing the new paradigm, we have to pay greater and fuller attention to the importance of building social institutions, families and communities alike, which play a crucial part in any development process. Age-old beliefs, values, traditions and relationship and behaviour patterns, so unique to each group of people and constantly being adopted to the demands of technology, are a part of modern life and anchor societies and social development. It is essential that these be preserved and enhanced, and not allowed to wither away as a result of the onslaught of influences and lifestyles brought to each door by the globalized media. Once there is a breakdown in the basic values of a society, there is no easy way to recreate what has been lost and to ensure future survival and progress.

Social capital has come to be recognized at last as an important and inevitable ingredient of progress. A first step towards the future should involve reinstating the sense of sharing that has governed human existence from the dawn of history, but that in the past few centuries has somehow been diluted in the race for economic growth. Sharing is a necessity, not a charitable act. Sharing must take place between neighbours at the individual level, between communities and between nations and regions. I believe that by practising the concept of sharing, we will be able effectively to address the concern that is foremost in our minds at present: the need to rapidly reduce growing poverty and the constantly increasing economic divide in the globalized world. In this context, sharing means providing opportunities and creating adequate conditions for poor countries to benefit from globalization. This will require the transfer of greater financial, technical and technological resources and the opening up of opportunities to poor countries so as to allow them to participate fully and on an equal footing in free trade by providing favourable access to developed markets without hidden conditionalities and domestic subsidies.

A good step in the right direction has been taken towards writing off the heavy burden of some poor countries' outstanding debts. I would like to appeal for the further development of this initiative through additional funds to help the heavily indebted countries. It must be extended to many other countries through a global strategy to deal with external debt, in the form of flexible formulas for debt reduction and rescheduling. In addition, more grant funds, rather than loans, must flow to such countries for development until a minimum threshold is reached.

However, Cambodia, as one of the poorest countries in the world, is very concerned about the overall decrease in official development assistance throughout the world, and we fully support the attempt to reach, as soon as possible, the yet-to-be-attained internationally agreed target of 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of developed countries for official development assistance. The impact of the financial turmoil in our region two years ago resulted in large-scale tragedy. That experience showed that the poor were the most vulnerable group; they were the worst affected by the crisis. There is, therefore, a dire need for a social safety net to be established to prevent future crises and for regulations, policies and measures to be put in place to ensure the smooth operation of market mechanisms. The world has spent a lot of time discussing the need to establish social safety nets and new financial architecture to control capital flows and speculative operations in the financial markets. However, it is regrettable that, so far, there has been no tangible outcome. It is time to end the rhetoric and to take concrete actions to resolve the cross-cutting issues currently faced by the world economy and financial system in order to maintain the social safety net for millions of poor people around the world who are vulnerable to all kinds of crises.

It goes without saying that the developing countries, too, have their part to play in the fight to eradicate poverty, promote full and productive employment, foster democracy and social integration and create an enabling environment for social development. To this end, they must adopt and apply policies to preserve peace and security within and among nations, strengthen the rule of law, ensure the existence of effective State institutions and transparency and accountability in the management of public affairs, encourage the participation of all citizens in the decisions that affect their lives and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development and gender equality. Furthermore, the developing countries need to implement measures for the sustainable use of natural resources and for environmental protection, so that they can continue to provide sustenance and support to all future generations.

Last but not least, capacity-building is an important means of creating a national political, social, economic and legal environment conducive to development and social progress. Priority should therefore be given to the enhancement of the capacities of the least developed countries, such as Cambodia, so that they can achieve the ultimate goals of social development, including the adoption of long-term strategies for sustainable growth and actions to implement, monitor and evaluate their policies and strategy.

I have outlined with only the broadest strokes the global needs to be debated and analysed so that common consensus can be reached on measures that are acceptable to, and that can be implemented by, all. I am convinced that the vision of and commitment to the future of mankind, which we all agreed upon in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted five years ago, are entirely achievable. We do not need additional volumes of position papers. We need only to trust our collective knowledge, learn from the lessons of the past, which are immense, and put more effort and energy into implementing our own commitments. I wish the Assembly every success in its deliberations here.

The President: I thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia for his statement.

The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Rexhep Mejdani, President of the Republic of Albania.

President Mejdani (*spoke in French*): I have the pleasure, at the outset, of expressing to you, Mr. President, my deep appreciation for convening this special session devoted to the problems of social development.

Aware of the great importance of the problems of social development at this time, Albania has made great efforts to achieve the Copenhagen objectives. As a young democracy, the State of Albania is making consistent efforts to consolidate the market economy, public order, democratic institutional structures within the context of its new Constitution, adopted two years ago, and its legislation, which is constantly being improved. We should also take note of the process of decentralizing executive powers now under way through the extension of powers to local authorities, as well as the expansion of their fields of action. In this way we are able to reconcile national sovereignty with supranational — European or international — authority, and with globalization and its attendant phenomenon, regionalization.

Considering that economic development is necessarily an important element and an integral part of social development, the State and the Government of Albania have made national economic development a priority. To this end, specific measures have been implemented to promote the privatization process in the strategic sectors of the Albanian economy, including the banking system, to stimulate and support local investment and to attract foreign investment.

Regarding the commitments of the State and the Government of Albania to promote the development of Albanian society and the achievement of the Copenhagen Summit goals, I wish to express my deep appreciation for the productive cooperation established between Albania and the World Bank. This was achieved through the implementation of a series of projects important to Albanian society and also thanks to the development and study of social development projects to combat a negative phenomenon prevailing in Albania, in our region and in other poor countries — "brain drain" — which is reducing the civic, intellectual and democratic potential of the countries affected and is accompanied by considerable social damage and economic loss.

I also wish to welcome the initiative taken recently by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to provide assistance to alleviate poverty throughout the world. This, in my view, represents important progress in moving from the social market economy to the moral market economy; in other words, a social market economy at the global level.

Despite the achievements I have just mentioned, Albania is facing many social problems that are the direct result of a difficult transition period and of the repeated crises that have struck the country and the region, such as those that have struck Kosovo. The State and the Government of Albania are studying the appropriate ways and means of implementing integrated action to alleviate poverty, while taking into account the community's social capital. This means establishing normal living standards wherever people live.

The Government of Albania will also, as a part of this strategy, examine the possibility of implementing public works programmes in the most disadvantaged communities, as well as specific projects and effective action for the most disadvantaged sectors of the population, such as the elderly, the orphaned and the various groups of disabled persons.

The commitment of all the countries in our region to the Stability Pact initiative will, I hope, open new avenues of development to the participating countries. In this context, the Government and the State of Albania are fully committed to making their contribution to the stabilization and long-term development of the region by supporting the processes of peace, tolerance, coexistence and the establishment of democratic institutions in the Kosovo region.

I should like to point out that the work being done today in drafting the three aspects of the Stability Pact will have a very positive impact on the economic and social development of the entire region, whose population is equal to approximately 15 per cent of the population of the European Union, while its gross national product is only 0.7 per cent of that of the European Union. In my opinion, the main point to emphasize here is that we must begin work immediately in order to complete these drafts. It is time to move away from repetitive meetings and conferences to specific achievements, avoiding all kinds of bureaucracy, particularly financial bureaucracy.

In this context, I wish to emphasize that we consider the free movement of people, ideas, capital and goods the basis of strong social and economic development and, consequently, of democracy in our region. A common economic bloc in the Balkans, a sort of mini-Schengen, would vigorously stimulate the development desired in the region by providing the essential impetus to the overall vision and concept of the Stability Pact.

In the context of these positive developments, Albania appreciates the current role of the United Nations, the European Community, the United States of America and other countries, and we hope that the interest expressed in the development and democratization of the region will continue to reflect the same degree of commitment and intensity in the future.

In conclusion, once again I wish you, Mr. President, and the delegations present a productive session for the greater well-being of prosperity and social development throughout the world.

The President: I thank the President of the Republic of Albania for his statement.

The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Jaime David Fernández Mirabal, Vice-President of the Dominican Republic.

Mr. Fernández Mirabal (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of President Leonel Fernandez and our Government, we hail the holding of this event.

Several world summits took place in the decade of the nineties — we could call it the "summit decade". But we believe that the Copenhagen Summit for Social Development really summarized the aspirations of our peoples and the commitment of our political generation.

We have a sense of the continuity of the State, and in 1996 we prepared a national plan for social development, believing that one of the greatest shortcomings in the commitments of the summits is that the average man and woman in the street, both in developed and in developing countries, and the grass-roots social organizations do not really know what commitments have been entered into by our Governments, so no social sector is really fighting to foster the fulfilment of those agreements. Citizens in the developed countries do not raise their voices so that

the commitments assumed by their countries will be fulfilled, nor are citizens in our developing countries organizing in order to put into action the commitments entered into. In order to reform and modernize the State, therefore, we are trying to mould this national plan for social development by involving all social sectors, Government institutes and local governments, with the support of multilateral and bilateral cooperative agencies.

We believe in participation and in decentralization as a strategy to achieve more awareness of what these commitments are and how we can carry them out. We believe that the age in which peoples benefited from the goodwill and good intentions of those in power is an age of the past, because it promoted a paternalistic and caretaking attitude. People can no longer be the object of our good intentions; rather, they must be a subject of the dynamic of development, must feel part and parcel of the dynamic. It is not a matter of working for the people, but with the people, not a matter of working for the peoples, but with the peoples. This will guarantee our being able to reach the targets established at the Summit for Social Development.

In the Dominican Republic, we have worked to strengthen our institutions, fostering respect for the rules of the game, democracy and justice in order to guarantee rights, especially of women, of children and of the disabled. But we have tried to work not only to promote rights, but also to promote the fulfilment of our duties so that there is a balance between rights and duties.

We have worked to promote employment, which has enabled us to bring down the unemployment rate in the Dominican Republic and to maintain an 8 per cent growth of gross domestic product in the last four years. We have managed to halve infant and maternal mortality and to reduce school dropout and illiteracy rates by more than 50 per cent.

But this is not enough to attain the goals that we set for ourselves. There is something we wish to take note of: the development of technology has been creating what we could call a "digital gap", which is to say that there are populations that have access to the Internet, to new communication technology, and there are other large populations that have no access. This gap will continue to heighten the difference between those who have opportunities and those who do not. Because of this, the Dominican Republic has managed this year to set up computer laboratories in all middle and secondary schools so that we have a balance in information. Thus, while at the same time addressing the social debt of the past and access of the people to basic services, we are also plugging into the computer age, so that there is a balance between present needs and future aspirations in the new information age.

We believe that it is necessary to devise a common agenda, of Governments and civil society, so that there will be a mutual commitment between the parties. We think that there should be more cooperation, not in the form of donations, but rather as financing for development. There must be a greater will to cooperate and to reduce the levels of bureaucracy in the agencies of international cooperation.

We reiterate the commitment of our Government and of our political generation to fight harder and harder against poverty by involving all actors. We understand development as a state of well-being in dignity; in other words, quality of life but also inalienable principles such as freedom and democracy.

The President: I thank the Vice-President of the Dominican Republic for his statement.

The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Flight-Lieutenant (Retired) Jerry John Rawlings, President of the Republic of Ghana.

President Rawlings: I must say how appreciative I am of this opportunity to address the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly. I join previous speakers in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election to lead the special session. We feel very confident that under your able leadership the work of the session will be carried out successfully.

I also wish to express the thanks and appreciation of the Government of Ghana, our people and members of our delegation to Mr. Adolf Ogi, President of the Swiss Confederation, and to the Government and the people of the Swiss Federation for hosting this important meeting and for placing such magnificent facilities at our disposal. However, coming from Africa, I do not know whom to blame for the lack of water on the tables. The advance of summer could probably make it worse for those of us who, with our skins, absorb more heat than those of you who reflect heat. I will need some water.

Following the 1995 World Summit, in spite of actions taken at the national, regional and international levels, the world's social situation is far from meeting the goals of that Summit. We have come to Geneva to participate in the Copenhagen + 5 special session because we all believe in the programmes we agreed on and the targets we set ourselves five years ago. We are very confident that all our colleagues, as well as our development partners, are also here and that, together, we will demonstrate support for the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

Painful as the short-term consequences of structural adjustment policies may be, many of our countries have implemented them in the hope that international economic relations would change so that their real long-term benefits might be felt. Unfortunately, our expectations have not quite been met. Our education objective is to attain the Social Summit's target of 100 per cent school enrolment and the sustained provision of quality education.

Ghana's commitment to the provision of universal access to basic health care is evidenced by over 60 per cent of the health sector budget's being appropriated to primary health care and the provision of health care facilities, particularly in the rural areas. Our health strategy provides free medical care to pregnant women, children under five and other minors. HIV/AIDS continues to pose a problem not only to my country, but to our continent and others in the developing community. We will therefore urge the developed world to extend even further to developing countries greater access to advanced medication against the disease and to eliminate mother-to-child transmissions.

As part of Ghana's employment generation strategy, the country's investment code has been revised and a Free Zones Area established in order to attract investors. A District Assemblies Common Fund has been set up, partly to be used as lines of credit to create employment opportunities by supporting small enterprises.

As some of my colleagues have already said, transparency in governance is an essential requirement for creating an enabling environment for meaningful economic and social development. But transparency must operate at both ends of the developing and the developed world.

Since the 1995 Copenhagen Summit, a number of Governments of developing countries have been overthrown on corruption charges and the trail of evidence has invariably led to the financial and banking institutions of some of our Western brothers and sisters. When in Copenhagen in 1995, I called for the relaxation of the rules of banking confidentiality and secrecy so that we could contain, if not stop, the perpetrators, as had been done in the case of drug monies and laundering. There were some who thought it was an idea whose time had not yet come.

Now, that time has come and we are beginning to hear the signals. Let me put this question to those here who represent members of the European community. What are we going to do? If we want a truly transparent governance system in our countries, then the Governments of the developed world and their financial and banking institutions must cooperate with us. They must pass the necessary legislation to make it impossible for the proceeds of corruption in the developing countries to be kept in their countries and in their vaults. Where this is done, they must make it possible for us to uncover and recover some of these proceeds.

In our countries, the governance systems are not only at risk from the military and fears of *coups d'état*. Most important of all, they are also probably at greater risk from civilians who corrupt the electoral process through disinformation, misinformation and the use of corrupt monies, whether obtained from domestic or from foreign sources.

Another glaring obstacle to transparent governance that must also engage our attention are attempts at interference in the electoral processes in our countries, even when these are clearly against our laws. Today, a good number of us know that there seems to be an unwritten rule in the Western world that, for there to be a perception of democracy — be it real or false — in a developing country, the incumbent Government must necessarily give way, change or be changed. Sadly, the question of whether that Government is doing well, through good leadership or not, seems to be irrelevant. Therefore, the opposition must be given material, financial and moral support from some Members here to achieve this objective. This does not very often exclude undermining the integrity of the ruling Government.

I am not saying that the ruling Governments are above board; however, given the extent of disinformation and misinformation put out by some

opposition parties — not all of them — in some developing countries and the effectiveness with which this is communicated by modern information technology, especially the Internet, one is almost tempted to forgive innocent foreigners who are taken in by this propaganda. But some of us know that many are not that innocent and do it in pursuit of their own agenda. This is not unacceptable and, with all our good intentions, we must make every effort to bring it to a stop.

What can we do with such resources? Quite frankly, I believe that such resources must be channelled to meet the basic needs of our people and thereby strengthen genuine and real democracy.

When we ask for development assistance, it is not only because we want to satisfy the basic needs of our people. But the stark truth is that if we do not get it, and are therefore not able to provide those barest amenities, my people — our people — will emigrate to your countries — the countries of the developed world, where they will add to the refugee, social security and racial problems of your very own countries. For those of us who try to deal with those basic needs, meagre resources have to be diverted to prevent or resolve conflicts, either in our own countries or in our own subregions. And these conflicts are not unrelated to the same struggle for the control of our resources, diamonds being the latest in the long list of resources that have fuelled Africa's conflicts. Yet without resolving these conflicts, we cannot talk about the social development of our people, which is why we have gathered here in Geneva.

We must adopt policies and programmes that will enhance resource mobilization in these countries, including those for debt relief, equitable international trade relations, and reversing the decline of official development assistance and foreign direct investment. Economic shocks, which are easily weathered by your nations, the wealthier nations, as mere temporary inconveniences, for us — where we come from — lead to very severe economic dislocations. In Ghana, for instance, the combination of low world prices for gold, cocoa and other commodities, which are the lifeblood of my country and its economy, coupled with the sharp increase in the world market prices for crude oil, is causing havoc not only in our national economy, but also in the economies of other developing countries. Those crises can easily translate into very unacceptable possible political fallouts, and that is what you will see on your screens in terms of the barbarism of my continent.

This time, and on this particular issue, my appeal goes to the oil-producing countries, a good number of which I hope are gathered here, to do something about world oil prices to enable the poor countries of the world to survive and have some resources to promote social development. We are doing our best in very difficult circumstances, but we need to be supported in order to succeed.

Let us not leave Geneva having only paid lip-service to social development. Let us not leave Geneva feeling satisfied with a successful summit. Let us leave Geneva with practical and workable strategies that will give further impetus to the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. Let us give hope to the poor of the world. Let us all do our duty on behalf of the bleeding, hard-working peoples of the disadvantaged world.

The President: I thank the President of the Republic of Ghana for his statement.

The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Hage G. Geingob, Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia.

Mr. Geingob (Namibia): Let me begin by paying tribute to you, Mr. President, and by telling you that the Namibian people asked me to give you the message that they are very proud to see you preside over the business of the General Assembly. In particular, the people of Usakos told me that they are indeed proud to see you presiding over the Assembly.

Namibians are equally proud to see another African managing the affairs of the world body.

We are equally happy with the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee, Mr. Cristián Maquieira, for his commendable efforts in the preparation of this very important special session.

Let me also take this opportunity to pay tribute to Mr. Juan Somavía, who is the brains behind the initiative for the holding of the Summit for Social Development.

Given the nature and the broad scope of many of the goals and targets expressed in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, Namibia recognizes that achieving the agreed goals will require much stronger and more comprehensive action,

political will and adequate financial resources. Because of the interlinkages among the 10 commitments on social development, Namibia has identified poverty eradication, employment creation and social integration as core issues for immediate remedial action. Within our first 10 years of independence, we have embarked upon the task of addressing these core issues through establishing the required national action plans.

We have put in place and maintained well-functioning physical infrastructure, strong institutional underpinnings for market development, sound economic policies and a well-organized apparatus of public administration. Since 1998, per capita income in Namibia has amounted to $1,748, and the real growth rate has averaged over 3 per cent annually, while the budget deficit has been kept well below 5 per cent and inflation relatively low, in the single digits. We believe, however, that effective poverty eradication will require sustained and higher per capita gross domestic product growth if we are to reduce poverty.

Poverty in Namibia is concentrated among the historically disadvantaged groups, and is disproportionately found among rural people. In partnership with multilateral actors, we have established an integrated strategy for sustainable poverty reduction in Namibia. The strategy focuses on three areas that are considered key to progress in poverty reduction, and highlights the need to foster, in the context of Namibia's commitment to regional decentralization, more equitable and efficient delivery of public services for poverty reduction country-wide; an acceleration of equitable agricultural expansion, including consideration of food security and other crop development options; and the identification of options for non-agricultural economic empowerment, including an emphasis on the informal sector and self-employment options.

While we continue to make strenuous efforts to implement our strategies and action programmes, I wish to emphasize that the classification of Namibia as a middle-income country by some financial institutions will jeopardize our chances of accessing the financial resources required for the effective implementation of the poverty reduction strategy.

The rapid spread of HIV/AIDS in Namibia is threatening the social and economic gains we have made to date. Hence, HIV/AIDS is a serious developmental challenge for us. We therefore reiterate our call for affordable drugs for HIV/AIDS and other related diseases. Furthermore, the international community should join hands in complementing the efforts of African countries in their fight against malaria.

In the area of employment creation, we have established labour-intensive programmes, which have shown substantial promise as remedies for expanding employment, stabilizing incomes during periods of drought and building infrastructure.

With regard to social protection, we have been able to establish both grant-based and contributory schemes. Social pensions for the elderly is by far the most important grant-based formal transfer safety net, and accounts for more than 2 per cent of gross domestic product. In addition to social pensions, disability grants and selective child and family allowances are important parts of the safety net. In order to widen the area of coverage, we have recently passed new legislation — the War Veterans Subvention Act — which makes provision for establishing a trust fund for war veterans.

In addition to these programmes, we have also established a compulsory maternity protection scheme and an employees' compensation fund, which are both funded from the contributions of employers and employees.

In our quest to foster social and economic integration, Namibia recognizes that globalization has stimulated growth and prosperity and expanded possibilities for millions of people all over the world. At the same time, globalization has diminished prospects for poorer nations and reinforced inequalities within and among the nations of the world. We believe that sound economic policies, transparency and accountability are crucial ingredients for effective social development. Therefore, partnerships with multilateral and bilateral actors are required to successfully promote sustainable development.

Our aim is to create a society for all, where every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play. Gender mainstreaming is therefore regarded as a priority.

We call upon the international community to support us in our efforts to create critical infrastructure services. In this regard, serious attention should be given to the systemic biases and asymmetries in the

workings of the international trading system, which limit the growth prospects of poorer nations. It is no longer realistic to expect developing countries to meaningfully promote economic and social development in their countries while at the same time continuing to service the debt. The debt of developing countries therefore needs to be cancelled — and cancelled now, at this conference.

Today's problems affect the entire global community of nations. We must therefore develop local responses to global problems. Let us, together, ensure that the twenty-first century becomes a new era of progress, solidarity and hope.

The President: I thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia for his statement.

The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency The Right Honourable Pakalitha Bethuel Mosisili, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho.

Mr. Mosisili (Lesotho): Allow me to express my delegation's satisfaction at seeing you, Mr. President, in the Chair during this very important special session of the General Assembly entitled "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world". You can count on the full support and cooperation of my delegation. Allow me also to extend our deepest gratitude to the Government and the people of Switzerland for so graciously hosting this special session.

Five years ago in Copenhagen, one of the largest gatherings of heads of State or Government took place to chart a new course for humanity's collective response to the challenge posed by the triple scourges of poverty, unemployment and social exclusion. The commitments that the heads of State or Government made on that occasion were momentous, as they marked a new era in which the centrality of people in the development process was recognized. We are here, five years later, to take stock of how far we have gone in meeting the tasks that we set for ourselves: how far we have succeeded in reducing poverty, advancing access to gainful employment and accelerating social integration. A backward glance is important not only for identifying the failures and successes of our past efforts, but also for creating a strong basis for future programmes.

The one phenomenon that has caused the most ripples in the period between the Copenhagen Summit and this special session in Geneva is globalization. This runaway horse has the ability to carry very far those who are strong and skilled riders, who can cling to its back as it hurtles forth at great speed and with tremendous force. The very same horse, however, can also throw off the weak and unskilled riders, with dire consequences. Unfortunately, the great majority of us are such weak and unskilled riders, who need to be helped to stay on the horse and travel the great distance that is possible.

The need to enable the weaker developing countries to mitigate the punishing consequences of failing to stay on the horse of globalization was most dramatically demonstrated by the reversal of the gains that the countries of South-East Asia had made in poverty reduction. Those gains were wiped out in one fell swoop during the financial crisis of 1997. That crisis underscored these countries' incapacity to offset the ravages of volatile movements of short-term capital.

Permit me to briefly share with the Assembly the efforts we are making as a nation to fulfil our Copenhagen commitments. The strategy for Lesotho's development endeavours since Copenhagen has been to emphasize sustainable human development. In this regard, we have designed a poverty reduction plan whose basic premise is that people should be enabled to live long, healthy lives, acquire knowledge and have resources that are necessary to accommodate their human needs. The plan has identified as priority areas good governance, poverty reduction, improving social services for the poor, creating employment and income opportunities for the poor and addressing poverty-related environmental degradation. The Lesotho Social Fund for Community Development has thus been established with our own resources for the purpose of funding these activities.

Regarding employment creation, we are diminishing our reliance on the public sector as the largest employer in favour of creating an enabling environment for the private sector to complement the public sector. Government is also streamlining its own institutional framework for undertaking public works to make them more efficient and better able to absorb the large numbers of unemployed. Furthermore, as a greater number of the domestic labour force increasingly derives employment from the informal

sector, we are in the process of strengthening linkages between the formal and the informal sectors, improving rural infrastructure, providing opportunities to enhance entrepreneurial skills and expanding market opportunities and access to credit, in particular microcredit.

For the health sector, a well-developed network of services is in place through cooperation among Government, the churches and non-governmental organizations and with the support and assistance of several development partners. Access to health services has been improved, even in the most remote areas, as priority is given to primary health care. Eighty per cent of the population now has access to health facilities, and an estimated 56 per cent has access to safe drinking water.

Significant improvements have also been made in raising life expectancy and reducing infant mortality. Indeed, infant mortality decreased from 85 per thousand in 1986 to 74 per thousand in 1996, while life expectancy increased from 55 to 59 during the same reference period. Furthermore, a comprehensive health reform programme is under implementation. This plan derives from the realization that the health gains that were made in the past have been eroded due to, among other causes, the advent of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the resurgence of tuberculosis, increasing population and insufficient resources.

In education, Government has given priority to early childhood development and basic primary education. Starting this year, free primary education has been introduced for the first grade and will be introduced in succeeding grades from year to year. The improvements in the quality of education have also been achieved through higher teacher-pupil and classroom-pupil ratios. A deliberate effort has also been made to increase budgetary allocations for education by 4 per cent annually, until we reach the desired level of efficiency. In this connection, the budgetary allocation for education has increased from 81.2 million maloti in 1990 to 518 million maloti this year, which represents 28 per cent of the national budget and easily the largest allocation to any sector.

The pressure on Lesotho's meagre financial resources resulting from this mammoth undertaking cannot, however, be overemphasized. The empowerment of women is a necessary condition for attaining our objectives in the social field. Discrimination against women, therefore, inhibits our efforts in this field. In an effort to combat all forms of discrimination against women, Lesotho has amended a number of laws; for example, the Land Act of 1979 has now been amended to give widows the full right to inherit their husband's residential property. Similarly, the Pensions Act of 1966 has been amended to allow women to receive pensions on a basis similar to that allowed for their male counterparts. In addition, our new labour code unequivocally prohibits discrimination against women and makes it a crime to dismiss women from employment on the grounds of pregnancy.

On the issue of governance, we are committed to developing and maintaining a high quality civil service that will undertake the core activities of maintaining law and order, ensuring protection and respect for human rights and delivering social services. Thus, Government is implementing a civil service reform programme which will ensure the right-sizing of the civil service, improve conditions of service, and boost morale.

Although considerable progress has been achieved, as indicated above, the battle is by no means won. Poverty remains pervasive in Lesotho and is the greatest constraint to human development. For this reason, our strategy will continue to be focused on sustainable human development in the years to come. A deliberate effort will be made to continue to target national resources on the areas where the poor are mostly concentrated, as well as to continue to implement special schemes for employment generation.

Despite efforts to increase access to education, the overall enrolment trend continues to be of concern to the Government of Lesotho. The latest data indicate that 69 per cent of children aged between 6 and 12 years were in attendance in 1997, compared to 75 per cent in 1990. Furthermore, a disparity continues to exist between enrolment for girls and boys. Generally, primary school enrolment for girls is higher than that for boys because traditionally boys are expected to herd livestock. Another problem is the high drop-out rate and repetition rate, which we hope the introduction of free primary education will redress.

The Government of Lesotho continues to monitor these developments closely and will aim to increase the allocation of resources to the Ministry of Education, particularly for primary education.

Although I mentioned earlier that there is considerable progress in the area of health, I wish to stress that the HIV/AIDS pandemic will have disastrous consequences for our development endeavours. The number of cumulative cases has risen, while our difficulty in this area is compounded by a lack of accurate data. However, what data is available indicates that the 15-to-49 age group is the hardest hit. The pandemic is also rising among expectant mothers. Recognizing this problem, our approach is that HIV/AIDS is not an issue for the health sector alone and that all sectors should make a concerted effort in the fight against it. In this connection, we are finalizing our national HIV/AIDS control and prevention policy and strategic plan, which will encompass all sectors and thus make our response a truly national one.

Regarding access to safe drinking water, although there has been progress, only about 56 per cent of the rural population has been served. The constraints include not only the shortage of resources but the inaccessibility of some of the remote areas. With respect to sanitary facilities, the poor find their cost prohibitive. Finally, we are making efforts to assist the poor by providing them with the necessary health education in order to empower them to make informed decisions about their environmental health.

The Government of Lesotho is fully committed to developing a culture of democracy, good governance, observance of human rights and constitutionality. In 1993 Lesotho, after over 20 years of unelected governments, held an election which marked a return to democracy. Another election was held in 1998, but that election was, unfortunately, disputed by three of the losing political parties, and their protests resulted in violent actions leading to the looting and burning of businesses. These, coupled with a mutiny by junior army officers, brought the country to the verge of collapse, and Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) troops were brought in to restore order.

This situation had a negative impact on the economy because of the closure and liquidation of several businesses and the consequential loss of jobs. Lesotho's economy was plunged into recession, with the annual growth rate declining from 8 per cent in 1997 to 5.5 per cent in 1998. Again, through SADC intervention, all political parties have come together to constitute a body which is called the Interim Political Authority, which is charged with the responsibility of preparing for fresh elections. These elections are now scheduled to take place sometime in the first half of next year.

In the meantime, the Government is pursuing a programme of reconstruction which includes the creation of a climate of political reconciliation on which the consolidation of democratic gains and democratic culture can rest; the redirection of energies to laying the foundation of sustainable human development; the realization of the major national objectives of poverty alleviation, employment creation, social integration and conservation of land; the creation of an environment conducive to economic growth; the attraction and expansion of foreign investment; the supporting of efficient service delivery at all levels by ensuring good governance, respect for the rule of law and human rights; and increased civil participation in development.

To conclude, let me observe that globalization is driven by market forces and that the vehicle for these is the private sector, especially multinational corporations. However, the sectors of education and health, which are the bedrock of our social development programme, do not easily lend themselves to private-sector funding. If we are to win the war against poverty, therefore, developing countries cannot be expected to fight solely with their limited financial resources. Increased official development assistance and debt reduction, not only for heavily indebted poor countries, as present global debt-reduction strategies contemplate, but also for all debt-stressed least developed countries, are an overwhelming imperative.

As we review the extent to which we have been faithful to the spirit of Copenhagen, one thing is clear: that the commitment to cooperate as one human family is far from being realized. The continuing inadequacy of resources for development in developing countries cannot be a basis on which the war against poverty can be fought. If nothing else, at least that one reality must change in the post-Geneva era.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Michael Ritter, Deputy Prime Minister of the Principality of Liechstenstein.

Mr. Ritter (Liechstenstein): Let me at the outset express my thanks and appreciation to the Government and to the people of Switzerland for their hospitality and for providing us with such excellent arrangements.

Five years after the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, where we expressed our will to give increased priority to social development in our national and international policy objectives and where we decided to put people at the centre of our development efforts, we are reuniting these days to renew our commitment to eradicate poverty, promote full and productive employment and foster social integration to achieve a stable, safe and just society for all.

Even though many new national policies and programmes have been initiated in the past years, the situation worldwide has not improved as substantially as we would have wished. In some key areas, even, regress is evident. We therefore strongly believe that common and comprehensive efforts have to be maintained to implement the 10 commitments we all accepted five years ago. In the outcome document we will adopt later this week, we will not only reaffirm the commitments of Copenhagen by reviewing the results of its implementation but also agree on further initiatives.

The eradication of poverty continues to hold its place at the top of national and international policy agendas, as the gap between rich and poor countries continues to grow in spite of existing plans and programmes and measures taken since the Summit. We believe that human rights and fundamental freedoms, democratic institutions and a market economy favour economic and social development, and we have therefore always sought to promote these rights and principles in the appropriate forums.

It is evident that not only values, but also resources are needed for an improvement of economic and social development. By contributing to various programmes and projects, Liechtenstein would like to express its continued support for the international fight against poverty. We consider efforts towards social cohesion, mutual tolerance, justice and equality to be very challenging tasks that can be fulfilled only in close cooperation among all countries.

In Liechtenstein, we are in the privileged position of being able to provide our inhabitants with a comprehensive network of social security and financial assistance. The unemployment situation in most regions of the world has slowly improved over the past few years, but continues to be one of the major problems of developing as well as industrialized countries.

Especially in the labour market, gender equality has to be promoted and gender discrimination has to be eliminated. This means not only the right to equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, but also other legal guarantees against all forms of discrimination in the workplace. Liechtenstein established these rights in the Equality Act of March 1999. Further measures and specific actions are needed, especially with regard to empowering women to participate in the public decision-making and implementation process and in the remunerated work process, and to ensuring their access to all kinds and all levels of jobs.

On the other hand, men have to be encouraged to assume their share of family and social responsibilities. This requires, in particular, more flexible working arrangements and the availability of quality child-care facilities. Every year, the Liechtenstein Government reviews the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and decides on a set of measures to achieve de facto equality between women and men in all spheres of life.

Social integration is another central issue in a world haunted by violent ethnic conflicts, racism and other forms of discrimination. We have had to note that prosperity and public welfare alone cannot prevent psychological suffering, social disintegration or a high rate of suicide. On the contrary, we must assume that prosperity leads to an increase of dissatisfaction and uncertainty, to egoism and a lack of solidarity.

We have come to realize that the pure granting of financial assistance to individuals, without expecting anything in return, makes people more and more demanding. At the same time, the willingness and ability of people to look after themselves are decreasing. People should not be reduced to being passive objects of public welfare.

We have therefore come to the conclusion that, whenever assistance is granted, it is reasonable to expect something in return — something which the concerned person is able to provide within his or her abilities and possibilities. Of course, people in need have the right to material and psychological help, but the principle of getting a service in return is a key element of our social policy.

Social attachment and cooperation are the elements of society's cohesion. Social networks, families, neighbourhoods, voluntary associations and new management cultures have to be supported by all means. Similar efforts for the improvement of the material basis should, in the spirit of Copenhagen, be undertaken to stock up on social capital. There is no fateful development, but political and economic decisions that lead to the destruction or accumulation of social capital.

The meeting rose at 1.45 p.m.